



Recommendations from the Civic Center Programming Focus Group

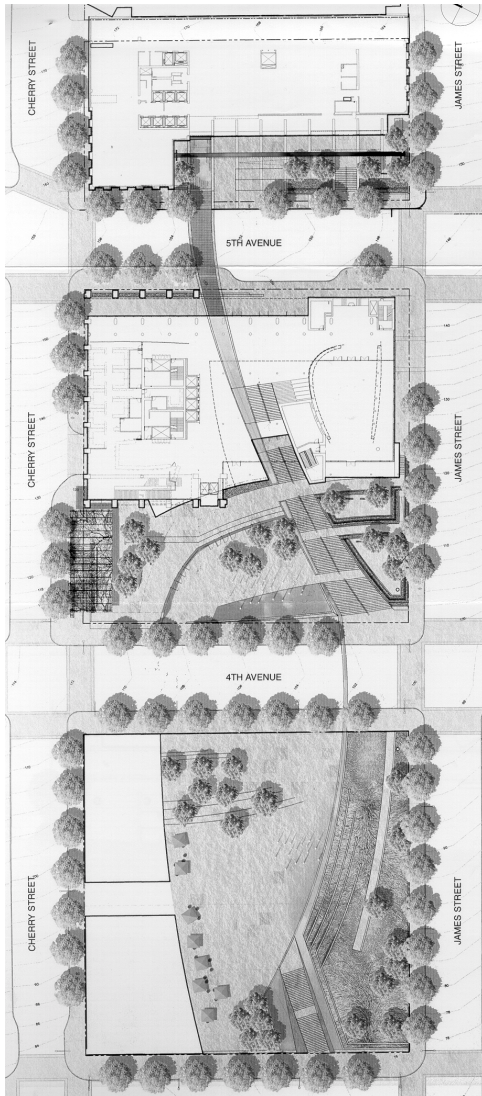
City of Seattle
January 12, 2001

citydesign

Justice Center Block

City Hall Block

Public Safety Block



Civic Center Overview

In 1999 the City of Seattle adopted the Civic Center Master Plan, a broad and comprehensive vision for the City's center of government. This plan links multiple buildings and exterior spaces into a municipal campus that will provide not only functional work spaces and citizen services, but also invites participation in the public realm, expresses our civic identity and serves as lively gathering place for all the citizens of Seattle.

Consistent with this plan the City has begun redevelopment of a three-block portion of Seattle's downtown core. Included in the project scope is the demolition of the existing Municipal and Public Safety Buildings, and construction of a new City Hall and Justice Center.

Civic Center Site Plan

Public Safety Building Block Located on the western edge of the civic campus, the PSB block will be entirely redeveloped. Public open space is proposed along the southern half of the block and new private office, retail, housing or mixed-use development to the north. This block will also incorporate an entrance to the Pioneer Square transit station.

City Hall Block Envisioned as the symbolic heart of the civic campus, the City Hall block bordered by the PSB block to the west and the Justice Center to the east. When complete, the new city hall will house the Executive, Council offices and chamber and meeting rooms for the City's boards and commissions.

The new City Hall will also serve as a central access point for citizens seeking municipal services. Customer service facilities located on the first floor, adjacent to the Fifth Avenue entrance, will assist citizens with routine city business or direct them to service locations elsewhere on the municipal campus. Open space is proposed along the western edge of the block.

Justice Center Block Bordered by Key Tower to the North and the King County Correctional Facility to the south, this block will include an existing parking garage to the east and new municipal courts and police headquarters to the west.

Key Tower Block Located one block north of the Justice Center, the Key Tower block is comprised of a 62 story tower, a 650 stall parking structure and a quarter block of open space and retail bridging two freeway entrances. The tower will house the majority of City departments including City Light, Seattle Transportation, Seattle Public Utilities and Design, Construction and Land Use.

Reasons for assembling focus group

Beginning in November 1998, the Seattle Design Commission has engaged in an ongoing dialog with the Civic Center's design team. While generally supportive of the overall design, the Commission has expressed concern about the quality and function of the public open spaces.

As the project entered design development, it became clear to the Commission that more specific direction was needed on how the interior and exterior public spaces should be programmed. As a result of the Commission's position—and similar concerns expressed by organizations such as Allied Arts and the Downtown Seattle Association—CityDesign hosted a series focus group meetings in December 2000.

Focus Group Goal

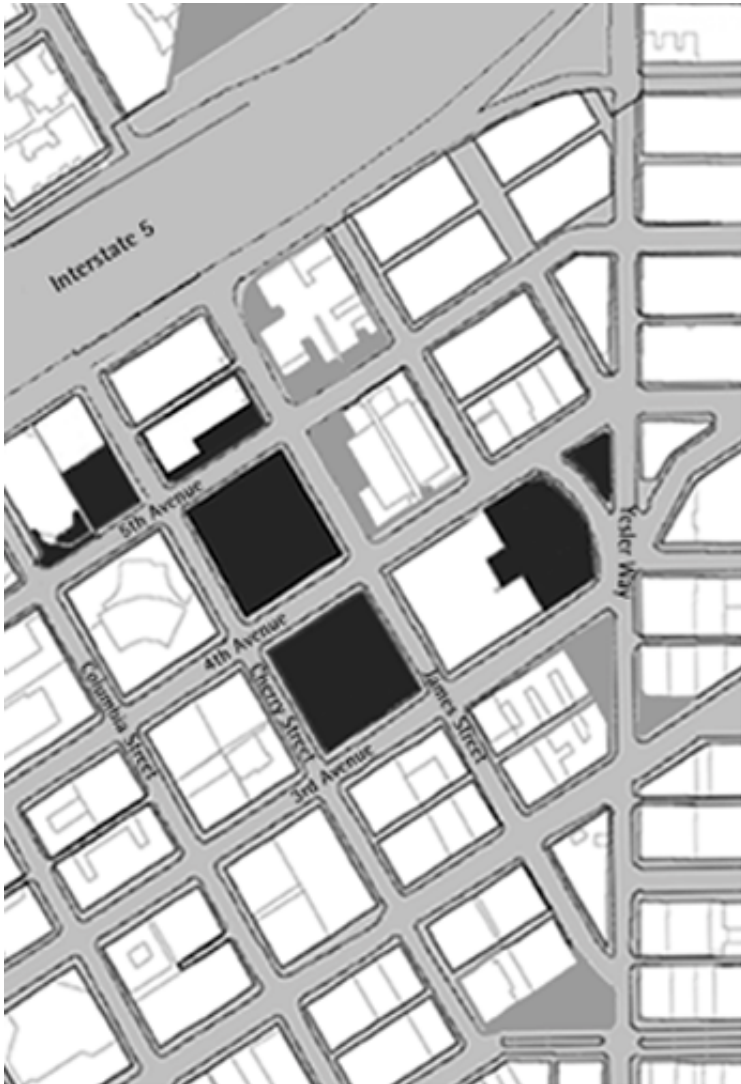
The original goal of these meetings was to develop specific recommendations to the Client Group on which uses should be incorporated into the Civic Campus.

To meet this goal, the focus group assessed and evaluated the previous open space goals as defined in the Civic Center Master Plan, the Seattle Civic Center Open Space Schematic Design Summary and other documents. The focus group initially evaluated the following principles, summarized from previous focus group discussions and the Master Plan:

- To provide great public spaces, both interior and exterior, which embody the ideals of governmental openness, community spirit, and civic involvement.
- To make a place that celebrates, with spirit and sensibility, the history and craft of the region that is its lifeblood today.
- To integrate City Hall and other public buildings with the surrounding urban fabric by recognizing adjacent community, building heights and configurations, and reinforcing both visual relationships and pedestrian movement within the Campus.
- To create a Civic Center which welcomes the citizens as central and active participants in the governance of Seattle.

Open spaces and other amenities are critical to the long-term health of downtown as a neighborhood. As a public sector initiative, the Civic Center project represents an extraordinary opportunity to provide amenities in a part of downtown in desperate need of them. Open spaces, public art, neighborhood services and active streets can contribute to the residential quality of a key part of downtown, and help to bridge a critical gap between Pioneer Square, the International District, and the Commercial Core.

Seattle Design Commission White Paper,
April 2000



- The Civic Center Open Space should become a landmark destination that is active 18 hours a day (*NOTE: the focus group decided that this principle was probably unrealistic to achieve for the first several years, and that the goal should be to extend the working day to the extent possible, taking advantage of activities which are naturally occurring on the site*)
- Retail uses, if part of the public space, should be subservient to the civic uses. (*NOTE: the focus group did not support the concept that retail uses should be “subservient” but rather that they complement the civic uses and contribute to the other goals for the spaces*)
- Effective and creative management is key to the success of public spaces.
- Public spaces should be designed to provide a venue for a diverse range of uses.

After the first meeting on December 6, the goals were revised. Participants determined that a more realistic and useful goal would be for the group to define the general character and quality of public spaces. After two additional meetings on December 14 and 20, the focus group compiled the following recommendations.

Public Spaces Recommended to be Managed by a Single Entity

A Management Recommendations

The most forceful recommendation to emerge from the focus group was the importance of establishing a staff and budget dedicated exclusively to the management of the Civic Center's public spaces.

A-1 The management entity should be responsible for all of the "unstructured" public spaces in the Civic Center complex, both interior and exterior, including the City Hall site, the Justice Center site, the Public Safety site, Key Tower, City Hall Park and Dome Room (Arctic Building).

The addition of the City Hall Park (a City park) is based on the County's plans to refurbish the park with the renovations to the County Courthouse; County representatives on the focus group supported this recommendation.

A-2 The management entity should be responsible for tenant management, programming, and maintenance activities of the Civic Center spaces, including landscape maintenance and day to day cleaning.

A-3 The management entity should include management and curatorial functions for the Cultural Café, to insure programming of consistent quality, ongoing activities, and access by a broad range of users.

The group believes that, in order for the Cultural Café to be successful, its management should be integral with that of the public spaces, and that a curatorial approach to the Cultural Café will not only ensure quality programming, but its appeal to a broad audience.

A-4 Because of the importance of strong management and the need to fund the management function, consider uses and a rental structure that could provide an income stream for the management entity.

The group heard a presentation by the Director of Friends of Pioneer Courthouse Square, in Portland, Karen Whitman. This non-profit organization is responsible for the management, including maintenance, of the Square. Ms. Whitman noted that 75% of Friends budget is earned from the rents and fees generated on-site, while 25% is from the City, to cover normal maintenance activities.

A-5 To the extent possible, the management entity should manage the retail spaces as well as the public spaces to allow for complementary uses and programming.

A-6 An open space management expert should be retained immediately to assist with the design and development of the civic center open spaces, and to insure complementary uses in all public spaces.

The group believes that an expert on open space management would be of great help to the City and the design team in the design of the Fourth Avenue side of the City Hall block (second phase of development) and the Public Safety Block. Such an expert could offer valuable input on many technical issues related to programming, such as physical needs for events or technical requirements for certain users including retailers.

B General Use Recommendations

The civic nature of the campus should be the predominant expression and the citizens of Seattle viewed as the primary users. The uses chosen should guarantee lively, dynamic spaces that are active throughout the year. The incorporation of retail uses is appropriate, but only where they complement civic uses and contribute to the goals of the public spaces.

The Focus group discussed the goal of an “18 hour” environment, and concluded that this was not realistic for this location, at least in the early years of the project. This conclusion was based on the realization that Seattle, like most American cities, actually has very few 18 hour neighborhoods, and those are usually the districts with a high density of retail or entertainment activities, such as Pike/Pine at Westlake Park or First Avenue in Belltown. Rather than an 18 hour environment, the group concluded that it was realistic to extend the activities on the site beyond the normal business day, by taking advantage of early morning or early evening meetings, arts activities sponsored by the Cultural Café, and other related off-hour civic activities, complemented by restaurant uses that allow for informal gatherings for attendees of these other events.

B-1 The City Hall block should generally be thought of as a “Meeting Place”, to guide to the overall civic activities on the site. Physical needs would include both formal and informal meeting spaces.

B-2 To insure a market for the uses, some activities should be geared toward the “natural market” for the site, which includes the workers in the surrounding buildings, government workers in the adjacent building, visitors to the government buildings, residents of the area and other regular users. Overall, however, because of its function as the seat of government, the uses must embrace all Seattle citizens, particularly on the City Hall block.

B-3 Private retail uses should complement the civic uses on the sites; public and civic uses should be the dominant uses on all blocks, but the relative importance of retail uses could vary by block. The City Hall block should be the most civic in nature; retail uses on this site must be discreet, with minimum signage, and must defer to the civic uses on the site.

B-4 The architecture and art should help to create an active and safe environment through the use of light, color and forms which provide a sense of activation even when the spaces are not inhabited.

B-5 All public spaces should be designed to accommodate a variety of uses, since it is likely that the uses will change over time.

B-6 Indoor and outdoor spaces should accommodate seasonal weather fluctuations; spaces should be programmed to provide viable uses all year.

B-7 Activities on the site should be coordinated with other downtown organizations and venues with similar functions. These include Town Hall, the Elliott Bay Bookstore, downtown museums, central library and the various performance venues.

C Recommendations for Specific Uses:

The focus group agreed that certain uses need to be included within the Civic campus. The concept of the Cultural Café was endorsed; services for the homeless and working poor must be included; and a variety of meeting spaces should be provided. There should be a selection of different types and styles of eating and drinking options. Spaces for rotating exhibits should also be accommodated.

C-1 The Cultural Café, as a venue for a variety of arts-related programs, including exhibitions, performances, and forums, should be a key element of the public spaces, should be highly visible, and can be integrated into other types of uses, both public and private.

C-2 Services and activities for the homeless and working poor should be provided on the sites. This includes structured programs such as the meal distribution program currently provided on the Public Safety site, and unstructured activities to allow the homeless to feel as comfortable on the site as other users.

C-3 There should be a variety of eating and drinking options, within a range of prices on the Civic Center blocks. The City Hall block should include at least one restaurant use in the public spaces; the restaurant should use tables on the outdoor plaza spaces.

C-4 A 'City Retail' use should be considered. This could incorporate sales of GIS information, city maps and other city products.

C-5 Spaces for rotating exhibitions should be included (as part of the Cultural Café or separately); the focus of some of the exhibition areas should be the city itself, including the neighborhoods and the functions of government. The City Hall Building should include some of this exhibit space.

C-6 Several meeting rooms providing for a range of meeting sizes and styles should be provided in the Civic Center complex.

These meeting rooms should not be clustered in a single location, but should be interspersed with other activities to prevent the creation of a meeting room complex, that could create a "dead zone" on the site. These rooms should accommodate a variety of meeting types, including neighborhood meetings, District Council meetings, forums, charettes, and project reviews.

C-7 Additional uses should be considered in the Civic Center spaces that exemplify a Seattle spirit and Seattle goals. These could be recreational activities , a museum or other non-profit civic uses. Other uses that are otherwise difficult for the private market to provide, but are desirable downtown uses, should also be considered, such as a grocery store.

Appendix

Civic Center Design Team

Architects

Bassetti Architects/Bohlin Cywinski Jackson

Landscape Design

Gustafson Partners Ltd.

Landscape Architects

Swift & Company Landscape Architects, LLC

Lead Artist

Beliz Brother

Project Coordinator

Architecture & Engineering Facilities Service Division

Project Management

Shiels Oblatz Johnsen

Civic Center Client Group

Mayor Paul Schell

Councilmember Richard Conlin

Councilmember Jan Drago

Councilmember Peter Steinbrueck

Dwight Dively, Finance Director

Maud Daudon, Chief of Staff/Deputy Mayor

CityDesign

Established in 1999, CityDesign provides design leadership by developing and maintaining an urban design vision for Seattle and upholding standards of design excellence in the City's review of public and private development. As part of this mission CityDesign regularly facilitates citizen workshops and forums on urban design issues and policies.

Seattle Design Commission

The Seattle Design Commission was established in 1968 to ensure that the citizens of Seattle receive the highest level of design quality possible in public facilities. Through a systematic design review process that begins at the earliest stages of design, the Commission engages with each design team in an ongoing dialogue about the design goals and proposed solution.

List of Participants

Gretchen Apgar	Speakeasy Network
Fe Arreola	Human Services Dept. - Community Service Division
Rodney Bauch	Downtown Seattle Association Planning Committee
Geri Beardsley	Council Central Staff
Maribeth Berberich	Human Services Dept. - Community Service Division
Lyle Bicknell	CityDesign Staff
Marilyn Brockman	Design Team Representatives
Beliz Brother	Design Team Representatives
Laurie Brown	Seattle Public Library
Cath Brunner	King County Arts Commission
Tina Bueche	Pioneer Square BIA
Jim Compton	City Council Member
Richard Conlin	Council Members from the Client Group
Layne Cubell	CityDesign Staff
Marty Curry	Planning Commission
Edna Daigre	Ewajo Centre Inc.
Maud Daudon	Client Group
Jim Diers	DON
Dwight Dively	Client Group
David Doxtater	The Workshop
Jan Drago	Council Members from the Client Group
Jerry Ernst	NBBJ
Tye Ferrell	Legislative Assistant- Richard Conlin's office
Tony Gale	ESD Green Building Team
Joe Garcia	ESD Facilities
Brad Gassman	CityDesign Staff
Barbara Goldstein	Seattle Arts Commission
Patrick Gordon	Zimmer Gunsul Frasca Partnership
Kathleen Groshong	Seattle Human Services
Dennis Haskell	DSA Planning Committee
Jon Hegeman	Founder of Fremont Sunday Market
Deborah Jacobs	Seattle Public Library
Ken Johnson	Design Team Representatives
Kate Joncas	Downtown Seattle Association
Davidya Kasperzyk	Allied Arts of Seattle Inc.
Rick Krochalis	DCLU

Greg Kucera	First Thursday Art Walk- Greg Kucera Gallery
Monica Lake	ESD
Kerry Lasko	Parks
David Layton	King County
Vicky Lee	Seattle Theater – Education Director
Nick Licata	City Council Member
Richard Mclver	City Council Member
John Merner	Seattle Center
Kenichi Nakano	Nakano Associates
Judy Nicastro	City Council Member
Rick Nishi	Seattle Public Library
Margaret Pageler	City Council Member
Mary Pearson	ESD Facilities
Janet Pels	Design Team Representatives
John Rahaim	CityDesign
Charlie Rathbun	King County Arts Commission
Melanie Reynolds	DON (representing the dept for Jim Diers)
Matthew Richter	Consolidated Works
Mary Jean Ryan	OED
Mayor Paul Schell	Client Group
Ron Sher	Third Place Books (former owner of Elliot Bay)
Marsha Sleeth	Lead Gallery & Wine Bar
Steve Sneed	Seattle Center
Catherine Stanford	Pike Place Market Association
Peter Steinbrueck	Council Members from the Client Group
Barbara Swift	Design Team Representatives
Renee Tanner	Downtown District Council
Barbara Thomas	artist
Brad Tong	Design Team Representatives
Susan Trapnell	Seattle Arts Commission
Mayumi Tsutukawa	Wing Luke Asian Museum
Peggy Weiss	Bank of America Gallery
Elizabeth Westburg	YWCA
Karen Whitman	Pioneer Courthouse Square
Heidi Wills	City Council Member
Ruri Yampolsky	Seattle Arts Commission
Rona Zevin	City of Seattle, Dept. of Information Technology



c i t y d e s i g n

Department of Design, Con-
struction & Land Use
City of Seattle